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COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN MALAYA,
1948-1960: THE ROLE OF REGULAR FORCES

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COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN MALAYA, 1948-60:

THE ROLE OF REGULAR FORCES

AN IAS-INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT REPORT

by

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ABSTRACT

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This paper is concerned with the conduct of counterinsurgency operations during the 1948-1960 Malayan Communist insurgency, with primary emphasis on the conduct of military operations. Data was gathered using literature search. The success of the British in this conflict is attributable to two primary factors: the establishment of centralized control and coordination of all military, police, and government programs; and, the resettlement of 500,000 Chinese peasants into new government villages thereby isolating the guerrillas from the people. The importance of developing an effective intelligence net, is emphasized, for good intelligence is the key to successful counterinsurgency operations. Food denial programs conducted in conjunction with the resettlement program proved to be the most effective type of operation conducted against the guerrilla forces but patrolling and ambushing in conjunction with political, social, economic, and psychological programs played vital roles in the defeat of the Communists.

PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to trace the military action of the Malayan counterinsurgency throughout the years of The Emergency, 1948-60. Primary attention is focused on the part played by the regular forces of the British Army; but, necessarily, also discussed is the role of the Malayan police forces and homeguard units.

This report is only one input into a major study effort being conducted by the USACDC Institute of Advanced Studies relating to Army roles, missions, and doctrine in low intensity conflict. It is hoped that through the research and analysis of low intensity conflicts that have occurred throughout the world, it might be possible to identify tactics and techniques most successful in defeating insurgency and to draw conclusions and make recommendations as to future Army roles in low intensity conflict and develop the necessary operational, organizational and materiel concepts for their support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In its present stage, the Malayan revolution takes on the characteristics of a new democratic revolution waged against the British Imperialists (including all their running dogs and lackeys, principally that group of feudalistic running dogs headed by the Sultans.) The objectives of the struggle are: to overthrow the British Imperialists, eliminate all their political, economic, and military influence in Malaya, wipe out the last vestiges of feudalism . . . replacing these with the formation of a Malayan Peoples' Republic. . . .

. . . the Malayan revolutionary struggle faces . . . an enemy - the Imperialists - who are both brutal in the extreme and well versed in experiences. In sum, although the British Imperialists are already in a decadent state . . . yet when compared with the strength of the revolution, they hold a superior position. This is because their military power (numerically, technically and in armament), their economics, material, transportation and telecommunications are still sufficient in breadth and scope to cope with the revolution. In addition, they are certain to employ every means, adopting the most resourceful and brutal tactics, in their attempt at speedy annihilation of the forces of the revolution. Altering this position of superior and inferior strength and of weakness between the enemy and ourselves is not to be accomplished in one day. Such a feature also indicates that by nature the anti-British national revolutionary war will be protracted, uphill and violent.¹

This statement, issued in December 1948, by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) some six months after the British finally formally declared a state of emergency existing in Malaya, clearly

¹This is a translation of The Malayan Party, Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War published by the Assault Press (place not stated), Nov 5, 1950, and found on pp. 101-103. Gene Z. Hannahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya, International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954. (DS596H33)

outlines the purpose and objectives of the revolutionary struggle while acknowledging that the path to victory would be long and hard. The optimism, the expectant air of success expressed in this document is to be found in countless other MCP papers published during the 12 years that lapsed before The Emergency was proclaimed ended in June 1960.

Even today, the last of the Communist diehards still hiding out in the jungle along the Thai border voice confidence in their certainty of ultimate victory.² And well they might, for in studying the insurgency one is struck by: (1) the number of important considerations inherently favoring the counterinsurgent forces; (2) the efficiency of planning and execution of operations of the British regular forces, the Malayan police forces, and to a far lesser degree, the Malayan homeguards; and, (3) the sustained high level of financial and moral support provided by the Government and people of Great Britain. Yet, in spite of such handicaps, for 12 long years a relative handful of Communist armed insurgents, never numbering more than 8000,³ fully occupied some 140,000 British forces including 40,000 regular troops and 100,000 regular and auxiliary police⁴ at a cost to the British of \$1.4 million per week or \$1.2 billion as a total cost to end The Emergency.⁵ Even then, the MCP can blame itself as much for

²J. M. Gullick, Malaysia (1969), p. 200.

³Harold H. Knight, Force Ratios in Counterinsurgencies (1966), p. 29.

⁴Robert Taber, The War of the Flea (1965), p. 143.

⁵Knight, p. 30.

its defeat as the British can claim they won the victory, for if the MCP had shown more restraint, discretion, and patience, that government victory so hard won might have been theirs. Continued vigilance and fortitude are needed even now to ensure that those remaining holed up insurgents don't somehow snatch victory away.

BACKGROUND

The Communists first moved into Indonesia and Malaya in the 1920's.⁶ Considering existing conditions one wonders why. And by 1926, the Chief Comintern representative for Southeast Asia wondered also; he fled Java, disconsolately blaming the indolent Malays for his lack of success and concluded that the Chinese in Malaya represented the only hope for success of the movement.⁷ As things turned out, his prediction was correct.

Few Malays ever joined the MCP. They are an easygoing, peace-loving people who were more than content with British colonial rule. They have a saying - 'tid'apa' - which means "nothing really matters very much."⁸ With such an attitude to overcome, the revolutionary spirit of communism had little chance and so attention was turned to the hard working Chinese, who by the time of The Emergency were virtually as populous as the Malays. With the MCP advocating citizenship and a voice in the government for the Chinese, one would imagine a great rush for membership in

⁶Dum-Joon Lee Park, The British Experience of Counterinsurgency in Malaya: The Emergency, 1948-1960 (1965), p. 143.

⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁸Vernon Bartlett, Report from Malaya (1954), p. 25.

the Party. But the Chinese were perverse, and few really resented their inferior position in Malayan society, for most still looked to China as home and Chiang Kai-shek as their leader. As long as they were free to operate their profitable businesses so they could return to China with their fortunes when they grew old, they took little interest in Malaya other than as a place of business.⁹ And so, by 1939, out of a Malayan population of five million, no more than 5,000 had joined the Party. It generally is believed that at no time did Party membership exceed 10,000 although one writer did put membership at over 100,000.¹⁰

WORLD WAR II

Without the stimulus of World War II, the MCP still might be struggling to establish a party worthy of the name. But with the War, to the Party came legitimacy, power, respect, and the popular support of many of the people. How did this come about? Suffice it to say that: (1) The British were defeated and driven out of Malaya by the Japanese. The loss of respect and face incurred had lasting effects. (2) The MCP developed a trained and equipped guerrilla force of about 7,000 men.¹¹ This Malaysian Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) operated throughout the War from bases established in the jungle. Although the MPAJA at best did little more than occasionally harass the Japanese, it was the only organized anti-Japanese force in Malaya and as such, gained

⁹ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

¹⁰ Gene Z. Hannahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya (1954), p. 25.

¹¹ Richard L. Clutterbuck, The Long, Long War (1956), p. 15.

the respect and support of the people. It should be noted that the MPAJA was recruited virtually entirely from among the Chinese;¹² to the Malays, 'tid'apa' prevailed and they learned to live with the Japanese. The Japanese in turn exerted their energies primarily against the Chinese, making conditions so harsh that thousands of them fled the urban areas to set up small farm plots in isolated areas generally along the fringe of the jungle. (3) With no British forces yet in Malaya following the sudden ending of the War, the forces of the MPAJA emerged from the jungle to receive the welcome of the people as the liberators of Malaya.¹³ Taking advantage of the situation, the MCP (MPAJA) seized control of sections of the country only to reluctantly turn it over to the British upon their arrival several weeks later. Even during the short period of holding power, the excesses of the MCP quickly disenchanted portions of the populace. The British took this opportunity to collect from the MPAJA a considerable number of arms parachuted in to them during the War. Although all weapons that the MPAJA accounted for as received during the War were turned in, it is evident that many weapons and much ammunition and equipment were hidden away in secret caches.¹⁴ (4) As payment more or less for the part they played in the War, the MCP was permitted to function openly as a legal political party in Malaya.

¹²Lennox A. Mills, Malaya, A Political and Economic Appraisal (1958), p. 53.

¹³Lucian E. Pye, Guerrilla Communism in Malaya (1956), p. 69.

¹⁴Rowland S.N. Mans, "Victory in Malaya" in The Guerrilla and How to Fight Them, ed. by LTC I. N. Greene, p. 116.

The British operated under no illusions during the War regarding the cooperativeness of the MCP. On more than one occasion, Chin Peng, who became the leader of the Party in 1947, stated that the ultimate aim of the MCP remained unchanged -- to oust the British Imperialists and establish a Malayan Peoples' Republic under Communist leadership. With the War ended, the MCP set about its task, and even the most naive observer would conclude that the Party occupied a position of power favoring the attainment of its objective.

1946-1948

With the end of a need for the MPAJA, it was disbanded and its members ordered into activities directed at the peaceful overthrow of the government. Labor unions were established; the leadership of established unions was seized by members of the Party; strikes were called; propaganda campaigns were directed against the domineering British lackeys whose authority already was undermined as a result of their defeat by the Japanese; pre-war efforts to interest the Chinese in attaining a position of equality with the Malays were renewed; continuing efforts were made to enlarge and strengthen the Party, and, though little success was had with the Malays and Indians, the Chinese populace, encouraged by the growing success of Mao in China (or discouraged by the weakness of Chiang), turned increasingly to the MCP for leadership.

By the end of 1947, the MCP had achieved considerable progress. Communists dominated 214 out of a total of 277 registered trade unions plus key rubber, tin, and longshoremen's unions. Overall, 75 per cent of all organized workers were controlled indirectly by the MCP.¹⁵ Social unrest had been created within Chinese segments of the population even though most Malays were alienated further from the MCP because of its support for equal rights for the Chinese.

But the Party had come too far too fast: recognizing the danger in the labor union situation, the British passed legislation restricting the holding of union office positions to persons having at least three years experience in the industry concerned plus other limiting restrictions; strongarm tactics on the labor front had resulted in the disenchantment of many of the workers; furthermore, emphasis on the labor front had resulted in a loss of support of peasant squatters, rubber tappers, and others living in rural areas;¹⁶ and some splits had been created within the Party itself as to the proper tactics to follow in efforts to overthrow the government.

By early 1948, fence mending was in order, and none of the problems were of so serious a nature that undue delays in the advancement of Party goals would have resulted. But instead, the MCP opted to drop its moderate policies and adopt more militant programs. There is some evidence that this was done at the urging

¹⁵Harahan, p. 58.

¹⁶Ibid.

of the World Communist movement,¹⁷ but perhaps it just was in reaction to the approaching victory of the Chinese Communists or possibly in response to British antiunion edicts. Whatever the reason, Chin Peng became the new Party leader and an aggressive program to include eventual civil war was adopted.

Riots, murder, arson, intimidation, sabotage, raids, and ambushes became the order of the day. Unsympathetic laborers in the tin mines and rubber plantations were murdered. Weakly defended police stations were raided for arms and ammunition. But the primary targets for the terrorists were British and Malay public officials and British rubber and tin managers. The murder of three British planters by the terrorists on 16 June 1948,¹⁸ was the final act culminating in the British government's declaring a State of Emergency on 19 June.¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, the MCP remobilized the MPAJA, ordering all ex-members to rally in the jungle and to arm against the British.²⁰ The anti-Communist war in Malaya had begun.

¹⁷Park, p. 39.

¹⁸Harry Miller, The Communist Menace in Malaya (1954), pp. 82-84.

¹⁹Park, p. 41.

²⁰Ibid., p. 42.

CHAPTER II

THE EMERGENCY

Within six months after the declaration of The Emergency, it was evident even to the MCP that a military victory could not be won by its insurgent forces, the Malayan Races' Liberation Army (MRLA). In hindsight it is clear that the Communists hardly could have chosen a less propitious time to initiate offensive action. There was little popular support for their revolutionary movement: as pointed out, the MCP had neglected the Chinese peasant squatters so important to their success during World War II in favor of organizing on the labor front; heavy world demands for tin and rubber had resulted in betterment of the laborers' lot thereby tending to placate their unrest; virtually no progress had been made in convincing the Malays and Indians of the efficacies of communism; and liberal economic and social policies implemented by the British had undermined other Communist causes. Also, with the ending of the Palestine police action in 1948, more British troops were available for duty in Malaya than at any time since World War II.

Communist strategy for the armed revolution was based on Mao Tse-tung's concepts and called for a three-phased advance of hostilities: (1) to cripple the economy through guerrilla action while fostering the strength of the MRLA; (2) to force the British Army out of the countryside, restricting its efforts

to guarding urban centers, supply installations, and lines of communication (3) to establish safe base areas from which military operations might be launched to include the eventual use of conventional forces--the use of these forces to lead to the liberation of Malaya.¹ Important to the overall plan was disruption of tin and rubber operations, for these two industries provided the bulk of government revenue and the means of livelihood for half of the population.²

In keeping with this strategy, in June 1948, the Communists instituted a reign of terror. Murder became commonplace, with public officials and British tin mine and rubber estate managers being prime targets. However, many a lowly rubber tapper had his throat cut by the terrorists as a lesson in cooperativeness. Countless rubber trees were slashed and at one time as much as one fifth of the latex produced was stolen and later sold as a means of financing the revolt.³ Telephone lines were cut. Railroad track was uprooted and mined. Although the terrorists avoided combat with British units whenever possible, they carried out numerous raids against weak and isolated police stations and security forces and skillfully set frequent ambushes along lines of communication.⁴

¹Hanrahan, p. 63.

²Mills, p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Miller, p. 87.

But the MRLA quickly found they lacked the leadership, training, and equipment to conduct even such low-level guerrilla warfare. Leadership for them was a real problem. Only about 60 per cent of the trained veterans and leaders of the old MPAJA answered the call to join the MRLA;⁵ and, unfortunately for the Communists, many of their experienced officers, including the former Commander-in-Chief of the MPAJA,⁶ were killed in skirmishes early in The Emergency. Qualified replacements for lost leaders were hard to come by. Some "volunteers" did infiltrate from Red China early in the revolt,⁷ but it appears that the CPR did little to assist in this way, and British efforts at blockading the coastline and the Thai border discouraged further attempts. On occasions, the killing of a small unit leader of the MRLA resulted in the surrender of the rest of that unit to government forces.

Training was inhibited by the lack of experienced personnel and by the lack of training areas and facilities once the MRLA was confined to the jungle itself. A general shortage of large stores of ammunition which existed throughout The Emergency further debilitated training and resulted in the fact that most guerrillas were poor marksmen.

Perhaps the most significant equipment deficiency affecting the MRLA was the lack of signal communications. Only through the

⁵ Knight, p. 27.

⁶ Hanrahan, p. 65.

⁷ Park, p. 63.

use of messengers were the leaders of the MRLA able to communicate with their subordinates. This system was slow and unresponsive and resulted in the necessity of issuing mission type orders to inexperienced, isolated small unit leaders, establishing quotas for the number of raids, ambushes, murders, etc., to be conducted over a period of time. Captured messages and messengers proved a valuable source of intelligence to the British.⁸

Backing up the MRLA was a fifth column organization called the Min Yuen. Thirty-five thousand of these willing and unwilling agents,⁹ mostly from the Chinese squatter element, were responsible for providing food, clothing, and medical supplies to the terrorists as well as serving as messengers, reporting intelligence information, spreading propaganda, and enlisting recruits. One of the major efforts of the British to isolate the MRLA from the Min Yuen support base resulted in the resettlement of 500,000 Chinese squatters and other groups living on the jungle edges to barbed-wire enclosed, newly developed villages. Over the years, this control measure proved highly successful for, without its support base, the MRLA was forced to organize into small, widely-spread units that could survive on what little food they could grow in the jungle or that could be smuggled out of the villages.¹⁰

Six months after the start of the revolt, the Communists were doomed to failure--the tin mines and the rubber estates not only

⁸ Clutterbuck, pp. 50-51.

⁹ Knight, p. 28.

¹⁰ James E. Dougherty, "The Guerrilla War in Malaya" in Modern Guerrilla Warfare, ed. by Franklin Mark Osanka pp. 302-304.

remained in operation but with inflated world prices became more profitable than ever; the MRLA had failed to establish "liberated" areas; no popular uprising had spread in support of the revolt; and the British had expressed a total resolve to see The Emergency through. Regardless, the Communists persisted in their terroristic tactics through 1951. In the last half of 1948, 264 civilians were murdered; in 1949 the figure rose to 334; in 1950, it was 646; and in 1951, 532.¹¹

Most of this terroristic action backfired on the Communists.¹² The slashing of the rubber trees only served to cut into the peasants' means of livelihood, causing resentment against the MRLA. The indiscriminate murdering of members of the civilian populace removed much of the sympathy and goodwill that had been built up within segments of the Chinese population and the utter barbarism of the attacks strengthened the will of the British to win.

In late 1951, the Communists adopted a new strategy calling for the end of indiscriminate terrorist actions, a retreat from aggressive guerrilla actions, to include falling back deeper into the jungle to regroup and retrain, and a renewal of political efforts to undermine the government.¹³ This strategy was adopted too late, for on the military front the British successfully pressed their efforts to ferret out the insurgents; and by

¹¹Mills, p. 53.

¹²Pye, p. 98.

¹³Hanrahan, pp. 73-74.

promising to turn over control of the government to the Malaysians as soon as the situation permitted, the British undercut the thrust of Communist propaganda efforts.

In spite of their general lack of success in the field, the guerrillas were encouraged by four events. One was the victory of Communist China over Chiang Kai-shek in 1949. Another was the inexplicable diplomatic recognition of Red China in 1950 by the British that gave encouragement to the MRLA while further perplexing the Malayan Chinese as to which side to support.¹⁴ Next, in 1951, the MRLA's successful ambushing and killing of Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner of the Federation, temporarily crushed the morale of the Malayan and British people.¹⁵ Lastly, the ending of the Korean War in 1954 brought the hope that Red China now would provide support to the MRLA. Other than these events, the MRLA had little good news and few successes of any import to point to as indicators that the tide of the revolution was turning their way.

For practical purposes, by the end of 1955 the Communists were defeated: 5892 guerrillas had been killed, 1196 captured, and 1742 surrendered. During this period government losses were 1796 soldiers, police, and homeguards, and 2415 civilians.¹⁶

¹⁴ibid., p. 68.

¹⁵Mills, pp. 58-59.

¹⁶ibid., p. 53.

MRLA forces, which never exceeded 8000¹⁷ and generally were maintained at 4000-5000, were down to 3000. By mid-1957, they were down to 2000,¹⁸ and today there remain only several hundred diehards in the jungle.

Although the outcome of The Emergency was inevitable as long as the British remained firm in their resolve, victory had a price. The cat and mouse game of hunting down the guerrillas was as expensive as it was frustrating. Forces were built up to 50,000 regular soldiers, 73,000 police, and 244,000 homeguards (militia enlisted to protect their own villages from attack). On an average, the price for killing or capturing one guerrilla was 700 hours of patrolling and ambushing. In dollars, the cost rose from \$83,000 a day in 1949 to \$234,000 a day in 1953.¹⁹

When in 1957, the Federation was acceded independence as the British had promised and was admitted into the Commonwealth as an independent nation, the Communists had no more trumps to play. Recognition of the Malayan government by both Moscow and Peking further disillusioned the MRLA. In an effort to save something from the revolution, Chin Peng, still the leader of the MRLA, attempted to strike a bargain with the new Malayan government that, in return for recognition of the MCP, the guerrillas would leave the jungle and lay down their arms. Such terms were unacceptable to the government and so The Emergency

¹⁷ Knight, p. 27.

¹⁸ Mills, p. 53.

¹⁹ ibid., pp. 53-54.

dragged on. With little military strength left, the MRLA could only conduct occasional terrorists actions, and by mid-1959 these were down to an average of just over one incident per month.²⁰

On 31 July 1960, Malaya's 12 year Emergency officially was ended. Over 11,000 persons had been killed on both sides, to include 6,710 guerrillas, 2,473 civilians, and 1,865 security forces.²¹ No armistice was signed, no peace treaty was agreed upon. The MRLA diehards still hanging on in the jungle even today occasionally conduct some terroristic incidents, but for the most part they openly admit that their movement has failed. They speak hopefully of using opposition political parties, trade unions, and students as instruments for future efforts to overthrow the government but they have excited no interest in such talk among the people.

This victory over a determined Communist insurgency movement didn't just happen. There were many ups and downs in the planning and conduct of the counterinsurgency before the victory was won. How the war was won is the subject matter of the next chapter.

²⁰Park, pp. 236-238.

²¹Ibid., pp. 239-242.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE WAR WAS WON

The Emergency lasted 12 long years. Why . . . when the Communists were doomed to failure some six months after the outbreak of hostilities? The answer is that judgments such as these are more evident when made from a position of perspective 10 years after the end of a war. Back in 1948-49, and even in the early 50's, it would have been as difficult to convince most Britains and Malaysians they were winning the war as it would have been to convince the Communists that they were losing.

In those days the initiative still remained with the guerrillas -- and their acts of terrorism were undermining the morale of the Malayan people and their faith in the might of the British Army. The people wondered if that Army, which could not stand up to the Japanese in World War II, could do any better against the MRLA. In those first years, in fact, throughout The Emergency, the Army never achieved one major victory, never won a single battle that could be pointed to and used as a means of boosting morale on the homefront. In an insurgent war, as we have come to know, there are no such victories. The war is won by killing or capturing one guerrilla today, convincing another one to surrender tomorrow, capturing a weapon or seizing a food cache the next. Nothing very spectacular ever seems to happen -- the biggest events are when some guerrilla leaders hunted

for months and years, are finally tracked down--and then in death they look so unimposing that it is hard to believe they have been the object of so much effort.

At the start of The Emergency the MRLA had a strength of 4,000-5,000 men. Opposing them were some 10,223 police officers and men and an Army consisting of two British Infantry battalions, six Gurkha Rifle battalions, three battalions of the Malay Regiment, and a Malay coast artillery unit, all of which were under-strength.¹ For two years these government forces thrashed around the jungle in vain efforts to track down the elusive guerrillas. More troops were brought into the effort and the police force was greatly expanded and still during this period things remained at a virtual stand-off. At this critical time (January 1950), LTG Sir Harold Briggs was appointed Director of Operations. This marked the first time that these duties were separated from those of a civilian High Commissioner and put in the hands of a military man. This served as an indicator that the conflict was now to be fought as a war. General Briggs' task was to prosecute the war and coordinate efforts of the civil administration and the security forces. After several months of traveling throughout Malaya and surveying the situation, he came to the conclusion that killing guerrillas was not enough since recruits always were available; what was needed was to destroy the morale of the insurgents and to cut off their sources of supply--and this could be done only by bringing the Chinese squatters under control. In

¹Miller, p. 87.

May 1950, the Briggs Plan, the key policy directive of The Emergency, was put into operation. This directive outlined the role of the military, police, and administration:

1. a military framework of protection working in the jungle fringes, protecting the populated areas and communications from bandit encroachment, destroying bandits who, for maintenance of morale alone, must attempt entry, and cutting off their communications with their Communist cells in these places;

2. the police force was to dominate the populated areas, dislocate and break up Communist cells therein, give local security and, by use of its CID and Special Branch, gain information from the population, now more responsive because of that added security;

3. extend the administration to cover the population, whilst bringing the more isolated parts of the population within the administration by resettlement.²

The plan also called for the formation of homeguards in the villages and the establishment of a Federal War Council, and War Executive Committees at State and District levels. In general, policies established in the Briggs Plan were followed to the war's conclusion.

This chapter will examine military, political, social, economic, and psychological actions taken during The Emergency to combat the insurgents. Emphasis will be placed on military actions and on the role of British Army units without any attempt being made at chronologically tying in one action or event with another. But the picture to be gained from this examination is one of actions that might be appropriate for application against guerrilla forces in future counterinsurgency operations.

²Park, pp. 101-102.

POLITICAL

One of the two most significant actions of the Malayan counterinsurgency effort was the issuance of the proclamation of a state of emergency in June 1948. By declaring an emergency and not declaring war, the country remained under civil rule, not martial law. The military was made subordinate to the civilian administration. But many sweeping regulations were issued under The Emergency, many as drastic as those normally imposed under martial law. The list of regulations grew to 149 pages. The most important of these were:³

1. Requirement that all people over 12 years of age be registered and possess an ID card bearing their picture and thumbprint. Rather than register, many Communists and their sympathizers fled to the jungles. Recognizing that the people would treat ID cards as a nuisance, strong incentives were given to retain them: the card was needed to draw rationed items of food (ration card numbers were printed on ID cards as a cross-check device), for grants to build homes, for obtaining garden plots, etc. Anyone outside of their normal area without an ID card was apprehended, and frequent checks were made by the police. Duplicate cards of villagers were retained in local police stations. Efforts by the guerrillas to steal and destroy cards resulted in

³Clutterbuck, pp. 36-39.

administrative quandries but did not defeat the system, and the system made it impossible for guerrillas to live in the villages with the people.

2. Suspension of the right of habeas corpus. People could be held without trial for up to two years on suspicion of aiding the Communists. This drastic action was required, as few persons brought to trial were found guilty for lack of witnesses willing to testify in the face of guerrilla intimidation.

3. Right to search without warrant. Frequently, it was necessary to search entire villages in support of food denial programs. A requirement for search warrants would have defeated such operations.

4. Permit required to carry a weapon. Any person caught with an unauthorized weapon (or consorting with guerrillas) automatically received the death penalty (the sentence could be commuted by the High Commissioner).

Other regulations covered the right to impose curfews, control food, create prohibited areas, resettle people, control road movement, disperse assemblies, raise forces of Special Constables, and many other things.⁴ These regulations provided the basic rules for The Emergency, and their enforcement drove the guerrillas into the jungle.

Approximately half the population of Malaya is Chinese. Throughout The Emergency (and even today) it was difficult to

⁴Park, pp. 90-91.

get them to think of themselves as Malaysians. British efforts to get them to participate in the government or serve in security forces met with little success. Over 6,000 Chinese left the country rather than serve.⁵ As virtually all of the terrorists were Chinese, the British felt it important that the Chinese population, insofar as possible, be actively aligned with the Malayan government. In this regard, the problem was further complicated by the Malays themselves who feared possible domination by the Chinese. At British urging, a Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was founded in early 1949 and eventually built its membership up to over 200,000. The Association was a severe blow to the MCP as it gave the Chinese a place to rally other than the MCP.⁶ With time, the Chinese did become involved to a limited extent in local government at the village level, and a few thousand came to serve in the security forces. Malay-Chinese relations also were improved, particularly as the result of a 1953 law passed in all but one of the nine Malayan states that allowed resettled Chinese to own title to land for the first time. A giant step was made in 1952 when qualifications for Federal citizenship were established making citizens of 3.1 out of the 5 million people of Malaya - 12 per cent of the citizens were Chinese, 78 per cent Malays.⁷

⁵ Collick, p. 118.

⁶ Park, p. 98.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 113-114.

In 1950, the government established a Rural and Industrial Development Authority with the mission of improving the life of villagers--bringing in electricity and water, improving rice production, building assembly halls, erecting schools, etc.⁸ Simultaneously, ordinances were enacted making people, through their elected officials, responsible for their local government, particularly in the new villages developed as part of the resettlement program. All these efforts were directed at having the people take an interest in Malayan affairs.⁹

Throughout The Emergency the British promised to make Malaya independent as soon as practicable. For years the MCP used this promise as a tool, propagandizing that the British had no such intent and that, upon the MRLA's ultimate victory, a Peoples' Malayan Republic would be established. In mid-1954, General Sir Gerald Templer, the departing High Commissioner of the Federation, stated that the Communist threat was no longer a bar to parliamentary elections and set a date for independence of August 1957.¹⁰ On 31 July 1957, independence was achieved and the MCP lost the war on the political front.

⁸Bartlett, pp. 55-56.

⁹Malaysia Dept. of Information, The Emergency: A Brief Account of Twelve Years of Communist Terrorism (no date), p. 16.

¹⁰Park, p. 219.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

From 1948 to 1950, the conduct of operations against the MRLA was handicapped severely by the lack of unity of command at all levels. The military distrusted civilian indirect control of military operations and civilian authorities were unimpressed by the military's lack of success in the field. In 1950, a military Director of Operations was appointed to the civilian High Commissioner and some of the problems were alleviated but he was hampered by having no control over the police with whom the military had to operate so closely. In January 1952, General Templer was given responsibility of High Commissioner and Director of Operations and unity of command was established.¹¹

During his two year tenure, General Templer functioned with a nine-man staff on the military field operations side thus cutting through red tape, staff meetings, reports from the field, etc. General Templer lived in the field as did his staff, constantly visiting security forces and getting a first-hand feel for events. A four-man team made up of lieutenant colonels would visit a battalion-sized unit almost daily, with the authority to make on-the-spot decisions and the responsibility for reporting to headquarters each day those particular techniques that had been used successfully against the enemy. General

¹¹S.N. Bjelajac, "Malaya - Case History in Area Operations," in Anthology of Related Topics on Counterinsurgency, ed. by Lackland Air Force Base Military Training Center, Vol. II, p. 189.

Templer believed that the staffs' job was not to sit back in headquarters and develop bright ideas, but to get those ideas from field commanders and pass them on for general use.¹²

Under General Templer, a committee system for directing the war effort was made to work. Though generally such a system is anathema to the military, it proved an efficient method, particularly in a situation not recognized as open warfare. Weekly, General Templer would chair a meeting of his Field Operations Committee made up of the heads of the Army, Navy, Air, and Police, the Chief Secretary to the Government (civilian), the Secretary of Defense (civilian), the Director of Intelligence (civilian), and the Director of Operations Principal Staff Officer (military). This committee issued operating instructions for the entire counterinsurgency effort; these flowed through State War Executive Committees (SWEC) composed of the civilian Resident Commissioner (chairman), the Chief Police Officer, and the Senior Military Commander (normally a brigade commander)--here policy was established and sent to District War Executive Committees (DWEC); at the DWEC's, detailed plans and operations were directed--curfews were ordered, food denial programs put into effect, etc. This triumvirate committee, chaired by the civilian District Officer, included the Chief Police Officer, and the Battalion (or company) Commander assigned to the district.¹³ Other civilian, military,

¹²Clutterbuck, p. 83.

¹³Park, pp. 212-216.

homeguard, and psywar representatives might be called to sit in, but at least these principal three members met daily in what came to be known as "Morning Prayers." At their 0845 daily meeting they would receive reports on the previous 24 hour happenings and make plans for forthcoming operations. The close cooperation between the police and the military engendered in these meetings proved to be vital to the success of counterinsurgency operations.

Implicit in the use of SWEC's and DWEC's was a concept of area operations. To the States of Malaya were assigned one brigade, responsible for conducting military operations within its borders. The States were further broken down into political subdivisions and a battalion or company from that brigade was assigned to each of these districts. In general, a battalion or company would establish a base camp near the District Headquarters while establishing other platoon and company base camps in outlying regions of the district.¹⁴ Battalion and company commanders were granted considerable authority in this decentralized mode of operations. Normally, these units would remain in the same operational area for months (hopefully until the Communist threat in the area was eliminated or so reduced that local police and homeguard forces could contain it), thereby establishing firm working relations with local government and police authorities and becoming intimately familiar with the area of operations.

¹⁴M.C.A. Henniker, Red Shadow Over Malaya (1955), p. 15.

Inherent in this method of operations was the need for strong leadership at all levels of command.

In keeping with this operational concept, the military in actuality was used to support the police. The police were responsible for operations in the towns and villages, with the military responsible for field operations.¹⁵ The key to all operations was good intelligence, and to this end Joint Operations Centers, manned by police and military intelligence officers, were established at all levels and served as operational nerve centers.¹⁶

Two other elements of command and control are worth noting. First, each rifle company was assigned two Chinese-speaking junior civil liaison officers who served as go-betweens with the people. They accompanied units on patrol in the field and were of value in the event any guerrillas were captured. Knowing the ways of the Chinese, they also were helpful in understanding MRLA ways of thinking.¹⁷ Second, radio was the primary means of communication between commanders and units in the field. Even it was seldom used except in the early morning and the late afternoon (before and after patrolling) and then atmospheric conditions frequently interfered.

¹⁵Bjelajac, p. 190.

¹⁶Anthony Crockett, "Action in Malaya," in Modern Guerrilla Warfare, ed. by Franklin Mark Osanka, p. 312.

¹⁷Anthony Crockett, Green Beret, Red Star (1954), pp. 56-57.

RESETTLEMENT

From 1948-50, the British had little success in prosecuting the counterinsurgency. The primary reason for this was self-evident. In much the same manner as they had during World War II, the thousands of Chinese squatters living in scattered settlements near the jungle provided all the support needed by the 5,000 Communist insurgents in the MRLA.

Commencing in 1951, the British instituted a massive resettlement program that came to be the single most important step of the entire Emergency leading to the defeat of the Communists. Between 1951 and 1953, 500,000 squatters were relocated in some 600 new villages. Old scattered settlements were replaced by compact new villages protected by barbed wire fencing and lighting of the perimeter. Most villages were provided water, electricity, schools, and community centers.¹⁸ Each family received 1/6th of an acre of land within the fence and three acres of farmland outside the perimeter but within two miles of the village. The people also were given title to the land. Every family was paid M\$100 and provided subsistence for six months in conjunction with their move. A police station was established in each village and, with time, homeguard units recruited and trained. Everyone was carefully oriented on the purpose of the program by government officials who spoke the local dialect of the new villagers. Under

¹⁸Gullick, pp. 114-116.

the guidance of Chinese-speaking British administrators, village councils were established and every effort made to have the villagers responsible for governing themselves.¹⁹

The program of establishing new villages was phased from south to north in coordination with military operations and security. With so many being established so fast, inevitably some did not work out and the people needed to be resettled again.²⁰ Most of the financing of this expensive program was supported by the MCA, thereby enlisting further interest of the people in the program.²¹ During this period it also became necessary to resettle some 650,000 tin and rubber workers to enclosed encampments within the estates. These moves were made at the expense of the companies themselves.²²

A program such as this naturally encountered considerable resistance and resentment, but eventually it did succeed to some extent in integrating the Chinese squatter into the Malayan political and social system. Most of these new villages flourished and still exist within the Federation.

The MRLA recognized the threat created by the new settlements. They now were cut off from their sources of food, money, intelligence, and other support. Recruiting and propaganda programs were

¹⁹Park, pp. 128-132.

²⁰"The Emergency," Malaysia Dept. of Information, no date, p. 13.

²¹Park, p. 130.

²²Ibid., p. 138.

endangered. The MRLA attempted to initiate more incidents around the new villages, knowing this would force the government to tighten security measures, impose curfews, reduce rations--all of these measures bringing about antigovernment sentiment. In many areas the government had an uphill battle to win the support of the villagers, and that support never came until the government could provide the people adequate security.

The new village program was not the panacea for everything, but in the short term it did tip the tactical balance by making the guerrillas come to defended areas for food and supplies, and, in the long term, it helped integrate the Chinese squatter into the greater Malayan community.²³

INTELLIGENCE

As in any war, but particularly in counterinsurgency warfare, good intelligence is the key to successful operations in the field. And as in any war, good intelligence comes from captured enemy personnel, from spies and informers, from contacts, from the grapevine, from captured documents and equipment, from aerial photographs, from patrol reports, from analyses of enemy operations, and many other sources.²⁴

In the early years of The Emergency, military operations were not based on good intelligence. In fact, most operations were

²³ Hans, p. 121.

²⁴ Oliver Crawford, The Door Marked Malaya (1958), pp. 179-180.

conducted without the benefit of any intelligence, resulting in what the British trooper called aimless "jungle bashing." Most enemy kills came from chance encounters. By 1950, about 50-60 guerrillas were being killed a month (another 20-30 were surrendering); six guerrillas were killed for every soldier but police force losses were greater than those of the terrorists. By 1951, as the result of improved intelligence, twice as many of the enemy were being killed, with only 25 per cent of them resulting from chance meetings.²⁵ Even with good intelligence the British Army reported 1000 hours of patrolling required for every contact, 1600 hours for every enemy killed or captured.²⁶

In Malaya, normal military intelligence-gathering procedures never were used. The police force was responsible for acquiring intelligence and did so in coordination with army unit intelligence officers. As most intelligence came from the civilian population, the success of the police was due to its contacts with the people, its knowledge of the language, and its ability to infiltrate enemy units.²⁷

Some of the methods used to gain intelligence were:

1. Anonymous letters or so-called "secret ballots."

Every villager would be issued a form on which to report any information he had on the Communists. These unsigned reports were

²⁵Clutterbuck, p. 54.

²⁶Park, p. 194.

²⁷Bjehjac, p. 190.

collected 24 hours later in locked containers to be opened only by the local military commander. Although this system had the drawback that many could not read or write, it had the advantage of providing the informer with anonymity and freedom from terrorist reprisal.²⁸

2. Rewards. Early in The Emergency the government instituted a somewhat morally repugnant system of rewards for information leading to the capture or killing of guerrillas. For example, such information regarding a Communist district committee member might be worth \$4,000-\$10,000. This resulted in many Malaysians "dreaming up" intelligence and reporting hunches as fact, but intelligence officers soon learned to discriminate between fact and fiction.²⁹

3. Agents. It was difficult to penetrate the Communist organization with agents. Normally, an agent was procured by persuading a person discovered to be working with the MRLA to serve as a double agent. The person so discovered had little choice but to cooperate, face a death penalty, or flee to the jungle to join the MRLA.³⁰

4. Captured or Surrendered Enemy Personnel. Almost without exception such personnel not only were willing to provide any information they could in response to interrogation, but would

²⁸Arthur Campbell, Jungle Green (1953), pp. 31-32.

²⁹Crockett, Green Beret, Red Star, p. 166.

³⁰Clutterbuck, pp. 89-90.

lead patrols into the jungle in search of their former comrades.³¹
If their efforts brought success, they were rewarded in keeping with paragraph 2, above. This lack of loyalty was so common that the guerrillas found it necessary to move their jungle base camps when they discovered one of their members had surrendered or been captured.³²

5. Captured Enemy Documents. As the terrorists were driven deeper into the jungle and contacts with the people became more dangerous, they adopted a system of couriers for delivering messages to unattended hidden letter drops. When a drop was discovered or a courier captured, much valuable intelligence frequently resulted.³³ As their courier system was so inefficient, it was difficult for the terrorists to know whether a message had been captured or just had not arrived as expected.

6. Aerial Reconnaissance. Pilots operating in light aircraft were assigned one particular area of the jungle for their aerial surveillance. Remaining in this same area for months, they came to be able to discern even minute changes in the jungle³⁴ which then were checked out by foot patrols.

³¹Campbell, p. 29.

³²Pye, p. 156.

³³Campbell, p. 125.

³⁴K. R. C. Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya," in Anthology of Related Topics on Counterinsurgency, ed. by Lackland Air Force Base Military Training Center, VOL. II, p. 195.

POLICE FORCES

The role of the Police Field Force in defeating the Communists cannot be overemphasized. Much maligned in the early years of The Emergency when they were undermanned (9000 constables), poorly trained, and not yet recovered from World War II decimation, they were unable to provide more than a semblance of internal security. Furthermore, there was little cooperation between the police and the military. With time these deficiencies were corrected. By the end of 1948, the police force was expanded to a strength of 50,000, or one policeman for every 100 guerrillas.³⁵ Intensive six-month training programs were instituted in the police's own jungle school. Two successive high-ranking professional policemen from England served as Police Commissioner of Malaya, bringing much order and expertise to the service. By the early 1950's, the Police Field Force had developed into an effective and efficient organization.

Administratively, each Malayan state was divided into police "circles." Each circle was subdivided and at this level (district) rested the responsibility for day-to-day operations--police patrols, investigations, supervision of police posts, etc. At this level close coordination with Army battalion and company commanders was effected.³⁶

³⁵Clutterbuck, pp. 41-44.

³⁶Crockett, Green Beret, Red Star, pp. 43-44.

At the village level the police were in a particularly vulnerable position, especially prior to the time when the military was able to provide the village nominal security. A settlement of 500-2,000 Chinese, many of whom were sympathetic to the Communists, would have a police force of 10-12 Malays (as pointed out previously, few Chinese could be induced to join any of the security forces--the lack of Chinese on the force was the main weakness of the police). To the credit of the police, few of their personnel adopted a "live-and-let-live" attitude thereby turning tacit control of villages over to guerrillas. Early in The Emergency, village police stations invoked a policy of calling one another once an hour--if no answer was received, reinforcements were sent to that post.³⁷

As experience was gained and training improved, the police field force manned "forts" in the jungle built to bring jungle aborigines under government control; force members patrolled frontier zones, taking on mobile patrolling operations formerly conducted by the military; special constables guarded rubber and tin holdings, made road gates and food checks; many auxiliary policemen were recruited who served without pay while relieving the police of duties not requiring special qualifications.³⁸

A homeguard force was organized under control of the police. Eventually, it grew to a strength of 250,000, of which no more than

³⁷Clutterbuck, p. 48.

³⁸Park, pp. 208-210.

40,000 were armed and on duty at any given time. The homeguards were recruited from their own villages for the purpose of helping protect them. Though generally poorly trained, they did prove of assistance in guarding posts and patrolling the perimeters of villages at night as well as assisting at road and gate checks and the like. General Templer set great store in the homeguards,³⁹ but in truth, they probably were of more psychological than security value as they represented another anti-Communist force among the people.

In Malay, the word for police is "mata mata" which means "eyes, eyes." During The Emergency the police came to be much more than that as they built a reputation of service and willingness to help that did much toward winning the peoples' support of the government.⁴⁰ As the agency primarily responsible for developing military intelligence, they were amazingly successful and cooperated fully with the military after several initial years of misunderstanding. Frequently, the target of Communist retribution, the police suffered almost six times as many casualties as the military. But the importance of the police force to the victory in Malaya was on a par with the contribution of the military, and an effective police force is essential in guerrilla warfare.

³⁹Clutterbuck, p. 83.

⁴⁰Bartlett, pp. 80-83.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Before he was ambushed and killed by the guerrillas in 1951, Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner of the Federation stated, "This is a war for the hearts and minds of the people."⁴¹ When General Templer succeeded him, he said he could end The Emergency in three months if he could get "the hearts and minds of the people."⁴² Using imaginative psywar programs in tandem with successful military (political, social, and economic) operations, the British accomplished this goal.

Probably the three most successful psywar ploys used by the government were the use of rewards leading to the capture of killing of guerrillas, the humane and generous treatment of prisoners, and the declaring of "white" areas when enemy forces in such areas had been neutralized. The government instituted these and other psywar programs early in The Emergency, thereby winning the support of the people while assisting in undermining the morale of the Communists. A fourth highly successful program already discussed was the promise of independence for Malaya at the earliest practicable date. The prospect of independence was a strong motivating factor in gaining the allegiance of the populace.⁴³

The use of a reward system was highly effective as a means of gaining intelligence and as an inducement leading to the surrender

⁴¹Mans, p. 120.

⁴²Park, p. 108.

⁴³Bjelajac, p. 189.

of terrorists. In 1950 a reward of M\$60,000 was offered for the capture of Chin Peng and M\$2000 for ordinary MCP members. In 1952, these rewards were raised substantially. A surrendering Communist insurgent could collect half of the reward for turning himself in. By Malayan standards, a terrorist could become rich by surrendering to the government. One of the top 10 leaders in the MRLA turned himself in and then helped bring about the surrender of 160 guerrillas formerly under his command--his reward was £ 55,000 British. This reward system brought results even though it left much to be desired from an ethical viewpoint. It is hard to understand why a terrorist who murdered a policeman one day might surrender himself the next and be rewarded.⁴⁴

Early in The Emergency, the policy was to have all captured and surrendered enemy personnel stand trial with death as the sure penalty. As this policy discouraged surrenders it was changed, and surrendering terrorists were guaranteed freedom from trial for offenses committed while serving with the Communist forces and promised a reward as outlined above, plus either free passage to China or enrollment in a rehabilitation program. Captured (as opposed to surrendered) personnel who cooperated with authorities generally were treated in the same manner.⁴⁵ In the five rehabilitation centers established in Malaya, personnel were provided

⁴⁴Park, pp. 188-191.

⁴⁵Pye, pp. 117-118.

excellent conditions--they had free access to visit nearby towns, they were taught a trade, and they were not subjected to pro-government or anti-Communist propaganda. At the end of 1954, of 2,750 rehabilitated personnel, only 29 had been captured again for working with the Communists.⁴⁶ Many other surrendered personnel served in a Special Operational Volunteer Force (SOVF) under police control. Some 12 platoons of 15 men each were organized into the SOVF and, after serving 18 months against their excomrades, with the same pay as policemen, the men were unconditionally released to civilian life.⁴⁷ Announcement of these conditions and others with slight modifications led to 116 surrenders in 1949,⁴⁸ 350 surrenders in 1953,⁴⁹ and 460 in 1957.⁵⁰

The government had a policy that no one was neutral: if a person wasn't for the government then he was against it. Punishment for neutralism and complacency was meted out, curfews were imposed, fines levied, entire villages moved to detention camps, food rations reduced, and other regulations governing The Emergency were imposed.⁵¹ The people in the villages naturally resented these restriction even though the need for them was understood. The only way the people could insure the early lifting of these

⁴⁶Park, pp. 168-171.

⁴⁷Bartlett, pp. 70-73.

⁴⁸Miller, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁹Dougherty, p. 306.

⁵⁰Park, p. 235.

⁵¹Bjelajac, p. 190.

restrictions was through cooperation with the government. The more intelligence related to MRLA operations provided the police and the less support supplied the guerrillas, the sooner the area could be cleared of Communists and the area declared "white." Once declared white, all restrictions were lifted and the people could lead a normal life. Henceforth, the villagers in white areas were quick to report any enemy activity in their area for they feared going back to black conditions.⁵² (As a matter of interest, guerrillas generally avoided creating incidents in white areas, knowing such actions might result in the renewed imposition of restrictions for which they would be blamed and this would turn the people against them.) By 1954, about one fourth of the total population lived in white areas. The last areas to be cleared were in the southern tip of the Malayan Peninsula and were not declared white until the late 1950's.

As in other wars, countless leaflets were dropped into enemy-held areas. On an average, 10-20 million were spread by aircraft each month and, during some periods when special efforts were being made to get guerrillas to surrender, the number would jump to 50 million. The Communists imposed stiff penalties on any of their members picking up a leaflet, and the terrorists' lack of literacy also decreased the leaflets' use. As a backup to leaflets, "voice aircraft" with a capability of delivering a 30-second

⁵²Knight, p. 30.

message to an area from an altitude of 2,500 feet were used extensively from 1953. Of all surrendered personnel, 70 per cent said they were influenced by such broadcasts.⁵³ Frequently, these propaganda messages (whether in writing or broadcast) were directed at specific members of an MRLA unit based on intelligence gathered from recently captured or surrendered personnel.

To assist guerrillas in surrendering (and often it would take weeks and months for an opportunity to arise so that a guerrilla could escape from his comrades), colored searchlights were placed in villages on which they could guide at night. On occasions, areas were declared "truce zones" into which no British patrols would operate or artillery be fired.⁵⁴ This eliminated the fear of being intercepted in the jungle where one normally fired first and looked afterward.

In directing propaganda at villagers, over 500 radio receivers were placed in settlements by 1951.⁵⁵ Campaigns to incite the people against the guerrillas because of their rubber tree slashing activities resulted in the terrorists' stopping it for fear of losing support of the people.⁵⁶ Dead and captured guerrillas were displayed to the local inhabitants as visual proof of the elimination of the Communist threat.⁵⁷

⁵³Slater, p. 194.

⁵⁴Bartlett, pp. 72-73.

⁵⁵Park, p. 177.

⁵⁶Campbell, p. 143.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 123.

Although the British psywar campaign was very effective, they admitted that it was not the decisive weapon in the war and that it was not effective at all unless accompanied by successful military operations in the field.⁵⁸

TRAINING

Declaration of The Emergency caught the British Army ill-prepared to combat the MRLA. British troops were not trained in the conduct of jungle or counterinsurgency operations. For two years they attempted to fight the guerrillas by using conventional tactics, and their lack of success indicated the futility of such efforts. If jungle schools and other training programs had not been adopted, it is likely that every new commander reporting to Malaya would have continued to use conventional tactics in an unconventional war; and by the time they learned their lesson, it would have been too late, for their tours of duty would have ended. (British battalions served in Malaya for three years. Most soldiers were Selective Service conscriptees serving two-year tours, so, other than for a few regular officers and NCO's, all units suffered over a 100 per cent turnover in personnel during the three years a battalion was in Malaya.)⁵⁹

The procedure adopted for training newly arriving battalions was as follows: While the unit was proceeding to Malaya by troopship, an advance party consisting of the battalion commander,

⁵⁸ Hanrahan, p. 69.
⁵⁹ Crawford, p. 196.

selected members of his staff, company commanders, and selected platoon leaders and NCO's were flown to Malaya. Upon arriving, they proceeded to a Jungle Training Center to participate in a three week course designed to prepare them to fight the MRLA. This course was conducted by highly qualified British and Gurkha soldiers, well-versed and experienced in fighting the guerrillas in Malaya. The course consisted of a mixture of classroom and field work, including an orientation on the history of The Emergency, Police and Army organization, junglecraft, navigation, air supply, how to set up jungle base camps, ambushing jungle trails, action to take when ambushed, quick fire exercises, noise discipline in the jungle, and guerrilla methods of operating. The course culminated with the personnel participating in a "live" three-day exercise against terrorists operating in nearby jungle locales.⁶⁰ Usually, members of the advance party managed to spend some time with their counterparts in the unit they were replacing prior to the arrival of their troops. This was of great assistance in gaining familiarity with the manner in which operations were conducted in the area, gaining information of the enemy and the terrain, and establishing friendly relations with civilian and police authorities. On occasions, new unit officers and NCO's went out on patrols with the departing unit, thereby acquiring valuable first-hand knowledge of the situation.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶¹ ~~Same~~, pp. 128-129.

On arrival of their unit, advance party personnel were responsible for training their troops. Everything they learned at the Jungle Training Center and what they picked up from the unit they replaced was ingrained in their troops. This training period normally lasted 2-4 weeks, with troops being drilled in jungle tactics until their reactions became automatic. This period also served to acclimatize the personnel to the extreme Malayan weather. Some claimed this was a rather leisurely and nonchalant method of going to war, but through bitter experience the British had learned the futility of charging into jungle operations with untrained units. The British also knew that local villagers were closely watching to see if the new units were on a par with departing units--initial successes were of great psychological and tactical value, for villagers were not likely to risk providing intelligence when they had no faith in local security forces.⁶²

During this training period considerable time was spent on jungle firing ranges to teach quick-fire techniques at 20-30 yard ranges. Marksmanship was extremely important, for seldom more than a quick floating shot at close range was to be had against the enemy before he would dive off a path to be lost from view in the jungle.⁶³ Procedures to follow in the event of chance encounters in the jungle were established and drilled into the troops:

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Crawford, pp. 188-189.

the lead scout would shout "bandits" and charge, to be followed by the rest of the patrol; if possible, instead of following in the steps of the charging lead scout, the patrol would dash to the flank and attempt to circle around the enemy.⁶⁴ On patrols, the troops established the policy of the lead scout looking for movement and listening for sound (noise discipline is extremely important in the jungle); five yards behind, the second man looked into the undergrowth on the right with the next man looking to the left, the next man looked up into the trees, and the last man always was responsible for rear security.⁶⁵ The denseness of the jungle precluded the use of flank security or movement down anything but jungle trails and animal paths. Alertness was vital to a patrol's security. During this period small units conducted numerous short patrols lasting only 1-3 days. This tended to condition and acclimatize the men while developing their ability to live and operate in the jungle.

The techniques of jungle navigation are extremely difficult. With maps being incomplete and inaccurate the problem was further complicated. No tricks to solve the problem ever were discovered. Personnel were trained constantly in the use of a compass and a map, but even the best seldom were able to accurately plot their location at the end of a day's patrolling in the deep jungle.

⁶⁴Hans, p. 141.

⁶⁵Hairs, pp. 30-31.

Tracking the enemy through the jungle was a major problem. Scout dogs were used but were generally quickly abandoned as being unsatisfactory. Jungle aborigines were recruited, but most were psychologically unsuited for such duties. Great success was had with Dyack tribesmen from Borneo. Up to four of these ex-headhunters joined each company-size unit during its training phase and remained with it throughout the unit's tour of duty. They had an uncanny knack for picking up and following even the most obscure enemy trails⁶⁶ and managed to transmit some of their ability to the British troopers.

Throughout the initial training period, in fact throughout the three-year on-the-job training and operating period a unit served in Malaya, four substantives of training were: (1) ingraining a spirit of initiative and aggressiveness in everyone, (2) constantly practicing rifle marksmanship (and put the best shots up front), (3) repetitive training in jungle navigation, and (4) development of junglecraft.⁶⁷

OPERATIONS

The following exemplifies the nature of counterinsurgency operations in Malaya:

Operation Nassau, typical of the battalion-size operations in Malaya, began in December, 1954, and ended in September, 1955. The South Swamp of Kuala Langat covers an area of over 100 square miles. It is dense

⁶⁶Crockett, Green Beret, Red Star, p. 50.

⁶⁷Miller, p. 142.

jungle with trees up to 150 feet tall where visibility is limited to about thirty yards. After several assassinations, a British battalion was assigned to the area. Food control was achieved through a system of rationing, convoys, gate checks, and search. One company began operations in the swamp about December 21, 1954. On January 9, 1955, full-scale tactical operations began; artillery, mortars, and aircraft began harassing fires in South Swamp. Originally, the plan was to bomb and shell the swamp day and night so that the terrorists would be driven out into ambushes; but the terrorists were well prepared to stay indefinitely. Food parties came out occasionally, but the civil population was too afraid to report them.

Plans were modified; harassing fires were reduced to nighttime only. Ambushes continued and patrolling inside the swamp was intensified. Operations of this nature continued for three months without results. Finally on March 21, an ambush party, after forty-five hours of waiting, succeeded in killing two of eight terrorists. The first two red pins, signifying kills, appeared on the operations map, and local morale rose a little.

Another month passed before it was learned that terrorists were making a contact inside the swamp. One platoon established an ambush; one terrorist appeared and was killed. May passed without a contact. In June, a chance meeting by a patrol accounted for one killed and one captured. A few days later, after four fruitless days of patrolling, one platoon enroute to camp accounted for two more terrorists. The Number 3 terrorist in the area surrendered and reported that food control was so effective that one terrorist had been murdered in a quarrel over food.

On July 7, two additional companies were assigned to the area; patrolling and harassing fires were intensified. Three terrorists surrendered and one of them led a platoon patrol to the terrorist leader's camp. The patrol attacked the camp, killing four, including the leader. Other patrols accounted for four more; by the end of July, twenty-three terrorists remained in the swamp with no food or communications with the outside world. Restrictions on the civil population were lifted.

This was the nature of operations: 60,000 artillery shells, 30,000 rounds of mortar ammunition, and 2,000 aircraft bombs for 35 terrorists killed or captured. Each one represented 1,500 man-days of patrolling or waiting in ambushes. "Nassau" was considered a success, for the end of the emergency was one step nearer.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Marine Corps Schools, "Small-Unit Operations," in *The Guerrilla - And How to Fight Him*, ed. by T. N. Greene, pp. 271-272.

Operations in the first two years of The Emergency most frequently consisted of battalion sweeps through specified jungle areas. Seldom was any hard intelligence available upon which to base such operations. As a result, the enemy would flee the area, with elements of the battalion at best only finding deserted guerrilla base camps. With no enemy discovered, reports were given of "enemy cleared from the area" and the battalion moved to another area to repeat the futile exercise.⁶⁹ If enough troops had been available to saturate the Malayan jungles, such operations probably would have been successful, but the British never were able to marshal that many soldiers. In 1948, there were 10 infantry battalions in Malaya. A battalion has about 700 men but only about 400 of these are available for field operations. Therefore, the British had only 4,000 troops in the field to combat the 4,000-5,000 MRLA insurgents, and many of these soldiers were tied down to static guard posts and other duties that normally would have been performed by police forces. By 1951, there were 20 battalions in Malaya or 8,000 men who could be put into the jungle to track MRLA forces that had grown to 6,000-8,000 men. During the 1950's the Army and the Police had achieved a two-to-one superiority over the guerrillas in the jungle but at no time was there a 10 or 12-to-1 ratio in the field.⁷⁰

Not having the manpower to apply stringent counterinsurgency programs all over Malaya simultaneously, the British established

⁶⁹ Clutterbuck, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 43.

a priority list of areas to be cleared, generally initiating actions in districts where the Chinese population was low. Typically, such a "black" priority area would be about 20 miles square with security forces of one infantry battalion (operating from four separate company base camps), 10-12 Malayan Police Constables manning a police post in each Chinese village, and a homeguard force of 35 men in every village. Six months before a priority operation began, additional undercover police detectives would be ordered into the area with instructions to watch for food smugglers and develop blacklists of such people. Military patrols would be continued as usual, the object of their operations being to seize enemy food caches. Curfews extending from 1800-0630 would be rigidly enforced as would food rationing programs (rice rationed at 7½ pounds/person/week; all canned foods punctured at the time of purchase; storekeepers required to strictly account for all food sold). When the police detective force had gathered their information, the Army and Police coordinated in establishing secret dawn cordons around every village in the black area, arresting all known smugglers. More police were then moved into the area and a brigade superimposed on the battalion. Patrolling was intensified then, with food caches remaining the principal objective; police searched all homes and confiscated excess food supplies--workers were not allowed to even take their lunches to the field; all vehicles passing through the area were stopped and searched; troops lived in the jungle fringes establishing numerous small ambushes throughout the area. As a result of these measures which

were maintained for periods up to six months, the guerrillas found themselves without food and no way of obtaining any without either leaving the area or taking the risk of raiding villages. The leaders of the MRLA seldom would allow a guerrilla unit to leave an area for then its Min Yuen organization would break down. The guerrillas therefore took more risks, resulting in more frequent contacts with security forces; hunger and casualty rates had an adverse effect on their morale, leading to increased surrender rates. Sometimes the British found it necessary to go through this routine several times before an area could be declared white, but in general this was a very successful means of operating. Unfortunately, there were only enough troops to conduct 3-4 priority operations at any one time.⁷¹

As an adjunct to these food-denial operations, the British instigated programs to win the 100,000 jungle aborigines away from supporting the MRLA with whom they had developed friendly relations during World War II. The establishment of 14 police post jungle "forts" was the essence of this program. In actuality, these "forts" were of little value militarily, but the civic action programs provided by the fort personnel did win the aborigines over to the government side to the extent that, by 1954, the MRLA controlled only 3,000-4,000 aborigines.⁷² Thus another source of food was denied the terrorists.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 114-120.

⁷²Park, pp. 146-153.

By 1953, it was estimated that the MRLA spent 90 per cent of its time attempting to develop food supplies. Jungle garden plots were planted but these were easily spotted from the air and were sprayed with chemicals.⁷³ Others were the target of ambush parties. By the mid-fifties, the lack of food and supplies was the principal problem confronting the MRLA.

Support from outside the country also was negated effectively. Patrol boats virtually sealed the long coastline. Although the Thai border never was sealed totally, a series of police stations was established across the front and patrols constantly operated in the area. The Thais cooperated to the extent of permitting forces to follow guerrillas across their border to a depth of three miles as well as placing some police in the area.⁷⁴

Several small-scale airborne operations were conducted against the terrorists. Although casualties were heavy initially, as new techniques were developed it was found that a paratrooper could jump into the jungle canopy as safely as into a normal drop zone. About half of the paratroopers would fall through the trees to the ground with no ill effects; the remainder used 250-foot nylon webbing ropes to lower themselves to the ground.⁷⁵ The advent of helicopters in 1953 served to reduce the limited requirement for airborne forces. As more sophisticated use of helicopters

⁷³Slater, pp. 195-196.

⁷⁴Hanrahan, p. 77.

⁷⁵Slater, p. 196.

has been made in Vietnam than in Malaya, their use will not be discussed in this paper. Suffice it to say they were of great value as a means of transporting troops to isolated spots in the jungle that could have been reached only after days of exhausting jungle marches (rates of advance of 800-1,000 yards per hour), thereby allowing more time for the actual conduct of field operations.

Although food-denial programs undoubtedly were the most effective operations conducted by the military (in conjunction with police and homeguard forces), they did not negate the need for tracking down and killing the guerrilla in his jungle hideouts. During the first 2-3 years of The Emergency, the British attempted to do this by sending battalions bashing through the jungle. These operations almost invariably had disappointing results, but the British doggedly pressed on with the exercises. Although few contacts were made with the enemy, unknown to the British, their aggressiveness and persistence in searching the jungle forced the MRLA (in order to avoid contacts) to break up its large 200-300 man units into platoon-sized units and eventually into 10-12 man groups. (It should be noted that food-denial programs also played a part in this reorganization of the MRLA into small groups because villages no longer were able to provide the amounts of food and supplies needed to support large guerrilla bands.) This had an adverse effect on MRLA morale, further complicating an already difficult problem of providing trained leaders

and cadres for guerrilla units, and made command and control of guerrilla units highly ineffective. (The MRLA had few military radios and never was able to establish command nets.)

By the early fifties, the British changed their tactics. Military operations in the jungle centered primarily on combat patrols by squads or platoons and, on occasion, by companies. Generally, company operations were mounted for purposes of enabling the unit to remain in the jungle for extended periods.⁷⁶ The company would establish a base camp deep in the jungle from which platoons and squads would operate, and air drops into the base camp every 4-5 days provided needed provisions.

Whether a company or platoon base camp was to be established, the procedure was the same. Every effort would be made to select a spot near water that was easily identifiable on the map or ground, and near a jungle clearing if the unit was to stay in the field long enough to require aerial resupply. The base area was searched to insure no guerrillas were close by, and then a circular perimeter established. Jungle vines or ropes would be stretched around the perimeter as a guide with other vines leading into the company or platoon headquarters. Several hours of daylight were required to set up a proper base camp, so it became standard for units to halt operations by mid-afternoon when a camp was to be set up.⁷⁷ Using the camp as an operational base, combat patrols and ambushes would range out in all directions.

⁷⁶Knight, p. 30.

⁷⁷Mans, p. 136.

Two principal systems were established for patrolling--fan and stream. Using the fan method, a patrol of 3-4 men would be sent out on a designated azimuth for a distance of about 1000 yards, depending on the time available and the denseness of the jungle; once out, the patrol could retrace its path to the base camp or go a predetermined number of paces to the right or left and then return to camp. Using only 3-4 man patrols, even a platoon was able to send out many patrols each day. Generally, a 10-degree spacing in azimuth between patrols was considered adequate to preclude any possible encounters between patrols. If enemy were spotted, one or two men would return to the base camp, where a reserve force always was maintained while the rest of the patrol kept the enemy under surveillance.⁷⁸

The procedures for stream patrolling were similar to those just outlined. Patrols of 3-4 men would work up and down stream banks, knowing that the guerrillas built their camps near sources of water. As maps seldom were accurate in tracing streams, there was considerable danger of patrols coming upon one another using this method of search. Therefore, unless the troops were thoroughly familiar with the area, the number of patrols employed was lowered in order to reduce chances of possible friendly encounters.⁷⁹ Three hours was about the maximum either type of patrol could maintain high standards of alertness, so patrols seldom ranged more than 1,500-2,000 yards from the base camp.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 137.

⁷⁹Ibid.

If an occupied enemy base camp was located by a patrol, a more or less standard method was developed for attacking it. After a platoon leader and his troops arrived from the base camp, the platoon leader would make his reconnaissance and plan of attack. This generally resulted in the platoon sergeant taking all but 5-6 men and dropping them off in two-man "stop" positions surrounding the enemy camp at a range of 300 to 400 yards out from the camp. Any trails in the area were ambushed with "stops." Establishing these positions normally would take up the rest of the daylight hours, so the troops would stay in position over night. The next morning, as soon as there was sufficient light, the platoon leader and 5-6 others would charge into the camp, firing at all enemy and their jungle shelters. This action seldom lasted over one minute. Enemy survivors would flee in all directions, their SOP calling for them to meet later at some designated point in the jungle. If the "stops" were not successful in picking up the fleeing guerrillas, then the Borneo Dyack trackers were employed to follow them. Normally, an ambush party would be left at the deserted enemy camp site, as the guerrillas frequently backtracked to the site in order to pick up hidden food and supply caches.⁸⁰

Although constant patrolling activity was an essential part of the British plan of operations, the easiest and most successful way of killing guerrillas was through the use of ambushes based on good intelligence obtained from the police. For example, word might

⁸⁰Ibid.

be received through an informer that a guerrilla force of unknown size was going to come to a certain area at a designated time to pick up hidden food and supplies provided by villagers. With this information, the military unit commander would make a covert reconnaissance of the area; great care was required during this phase, for if troops were seen in the area by any of the villagers or rubber tappers, the word would be passed through the Min Yuen to the guerrillas and the pickup would be cancelled. If time permitted, the ambush force would then rehearse in an area similar to the pickup site or a rough sand-table model would be constructed for orientation purposes. When the time arrived, the ambush force was dispatched. If put into position at night (when the enemy generally accomplished such pickups), the ambush party might be able to move directly to the ambush site without fear of being spotted by villagers, whose movement was restricted by curfew regulations; if positioned by day, it would employ some cover means such as entering the jungle in another area and circling back under jungle cover to the ambush site. If the pickup site was an open area such as a rubber plantation, "area ambush" positions would be employed: 2-3 man positions established covering all possible avenues of escape. Jungle ambushes generally would be set up along trails, with great care taken that all men were camouflaged and that there was no evidence of their presence in the area. Ropes or jungle vines would be stretched from position to position and signals established for alerting personnel and for

opening fire. Booby traps would be set up off the trail, for the enemy invariably would dive into the underbrush the moment the ambush was sprung. Not infrequently ambush positions would be maintained for 4-5 days waiting for the enemy.⁸¹

All patrols and ambush parties were carefully debriefed by intelligence officers. Particular attention was paid to verifying the correctness of maps and to obtaining terrain sketches of the area. Any sightings of enemy tracks, deserted base camp sites, jungle garden plots, jungle clearing areas, etc., were plotted on intelligence maps for future reference.

Close air support and bombing strikes were used in support of jungle operations. Although there were instances of successful strikes, the chances of killing guerrillas in jungle hideouts through the use of air power were slight. Aircraft were employed most profitably as a means of resupplying ground units operating in the jungle.

Maintaining troop morale was a real problem. Many a British trooper spent his entire Malayan tour patrolling through the difficult jungle and setting up countless ambushes without ever seeing one of the enemy. The excellent morale that was maintained was attributable to four factors: (1) good leadership by junior officers and NCO's; (2) intense interest in daily operations by all ranks; (3) prevention of boredom by keeping forces out on operations; and (4) maintaining pleasant base camps.⁸²

⁸¹ ibid., pp. 129-133.

⁸² Crockett, Modern Guerrilla Warfare, p. 316.

By the end of 1954, the British had defeated the MRLA militarily. Recognizing the resilience of the Communist movement, however, the British maintained constant pressure on the MRLA until, by the end of The Emergency, guerrilla forces numbered no more than 100 personnel. This force, isolated from the people ideologically and physically, no longer was a threat to Malays.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Several important factors can be pointed to as significantly attributing to the successful counterinsurgency effort in Malaya:

1. **Command and Control.** Far-reaching regulations were established, permitting considerable latitude in the prosecution of counterinsurgency operations. Officials then functioned within the legal limits of these regulations and took steps to ensure that they were complied with by everyone. The appointment of General Sir Gerald Templer as the High Commissioner of the Federation and Director of Operations brought about centralization of control and the effective coordination of military, police, and other government programs.

2. **Resettlement.** Resettlement per se is no solution to any of the problems of counterinsurgency. Resettlement in which new villages are provided security from enemy attacks and social, political, economic, and psychological programs are conducted simultaneously is an effective means of isolating guerrilla forces from the populace while winning the people over to the government side.

3. **Intelligence.** Intelligence is the key to successful military operations. As most of the intelligence comes from the people by way of their contacts with guerrilla forces, civilian police forces represent the prime agency for developing intelligence.

Close cooperation between police and military intelligence personnel is mandatory.

4. Food-Denial Programs. In a jungle environment where the enemy is cut off from out-of-country support, food-denial programs are the most effective means of disrupting his operations. Successful food-denial programs lead to the enemy's breaking up into smaller, more easily sustainable groups; cause the enemy to spend much of his time cultivating his own crops; and makes the enemy take more risks in attempting to obtain food from the populace.

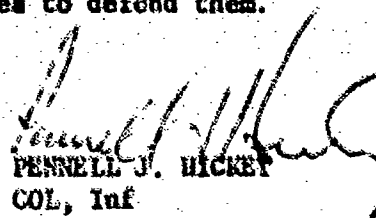
5. Coordination of Effort. A military victory is meaningless unless won in an atmosphere promising change from conditions first responsible for the insurrection. The support of the people must be gained early in the war effort, and this can be done best through a coordinated program of political, social, and economic development and change.

6. Small Unit Operations. Battalion and larger size unit operations seldom are successful when conducted against guerrilla forces. The enemy will not stand and fight against such a superior force, and the movement of large forces through a jungle negates any opportunity of surprising guerrilla units. Decentralizing command and control to where platoon and smaller sized operations were the norm, the British were able to cover isolated jungle areas more thoroughly, thereby increasing opportunities of making contacts with the enemy, and to seize control of much of the

hinterland, driving the enemy further from the people and his support base. In effect, the British waged guerrilla warfare against the guerrillas.

7. Air Operations. The use of tactical air support against small enemy units operating in a jungle environment is unsatisfactory. Air is best used as a means of transport and medical evacuation (helicopter) and for providing aerial resupply.

8. Continuity of Effort. British units were assigned a particular area of responsibility in Malaya and remained there until such time as the area was pacified to the extent that it could be controlled by police and homeguard units. This policy enabled the troops to gain complete familiarity with the terrain and the enemy and his method of operating, while carrying on long-range civic action programs with the people. This policy had a positive psychological effect on the people and tended to enlist their cooperation once they developed faith in the capability of the unit in their area to defend them.


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